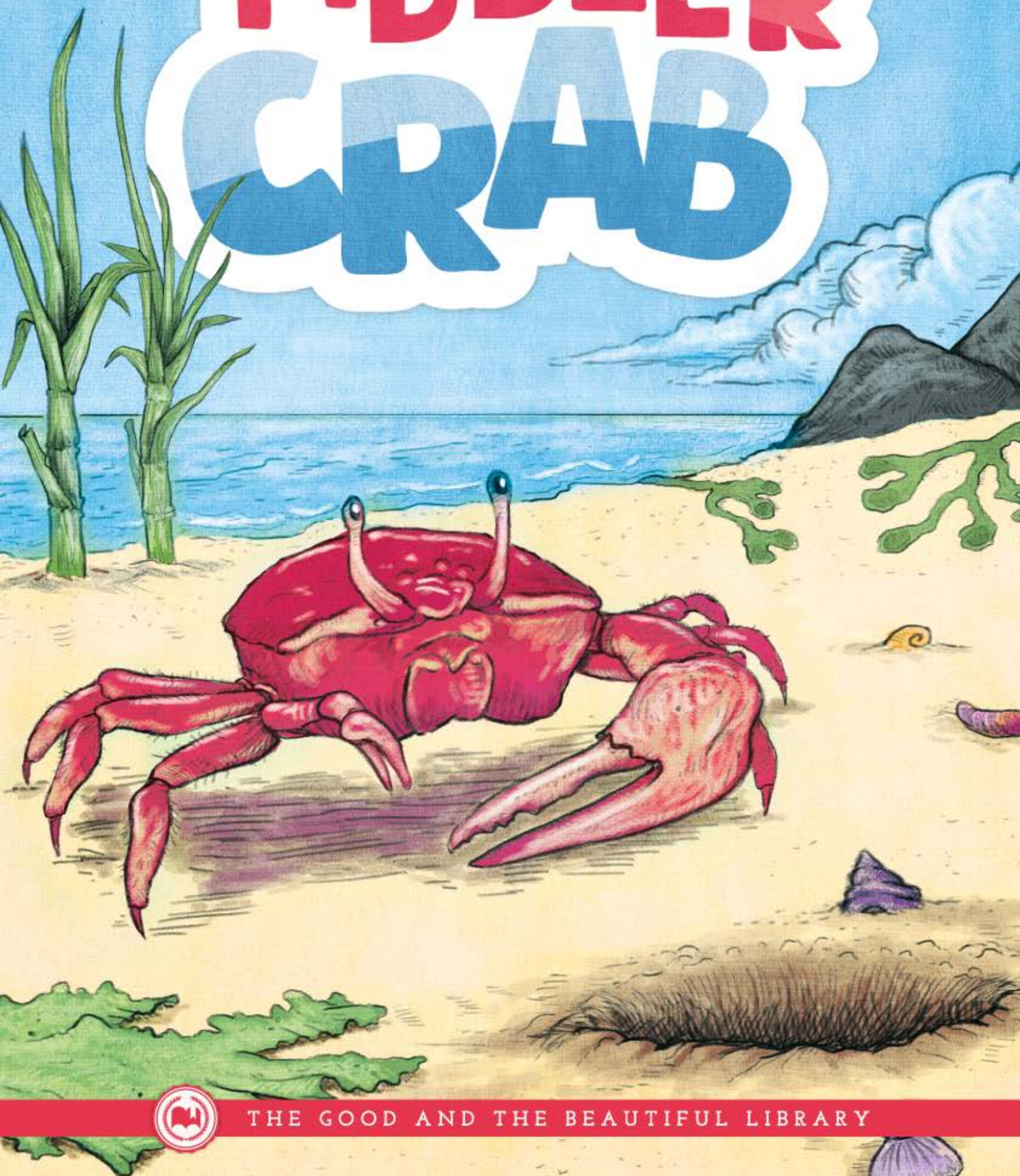


# FIDDLER CRAB



THE GOOD AND THE BEAUTIFUL LIBRARY

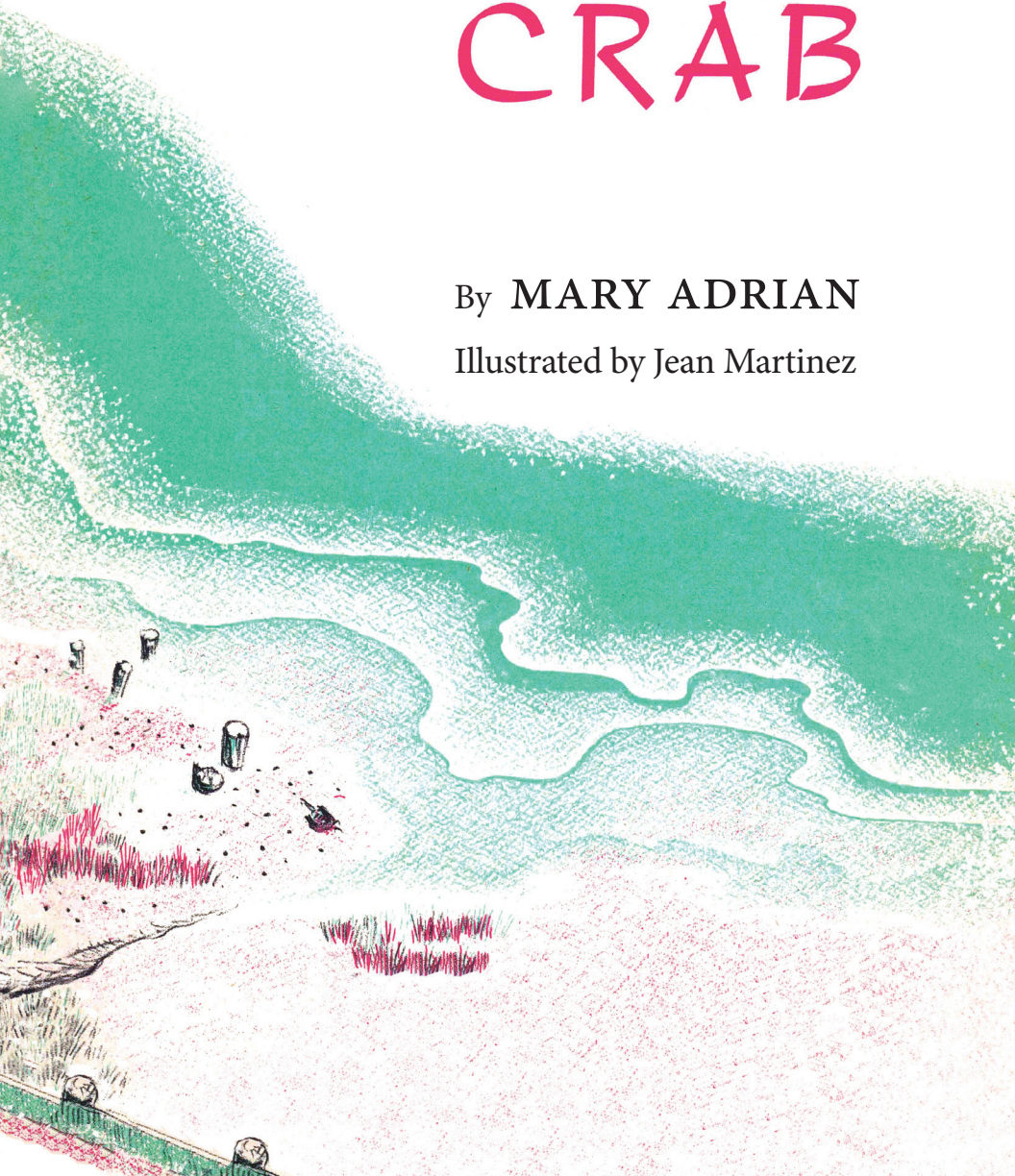
Mary Adrian



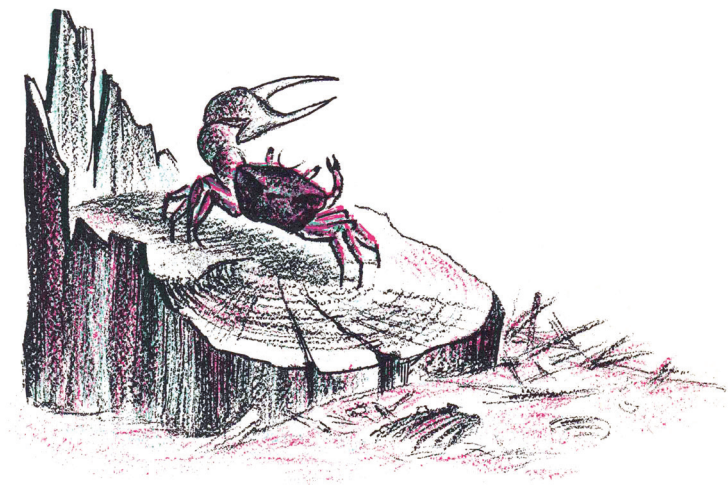
# FIDDLER CRAB

By MARY ADRIAN

Illustrated by Jean Martinez



A NOTE ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS. In the underwater illustrations, the minute plants and animals have been drawn larger than their true relative scale in order to make their details visible. Many of them are actually much smaller in relation to the zoea.



## FOREWORD

Fiddler crabs are the most numerous of all crabs. Many species inhabit the sandy beaches, the mud flats, and the river mouths of nearly all our seashores, from Massachusetts to Florida to Texas, and from California to Washington.

The most common of the sand fiddler crabs, *Uca pugilator* (Bosc), which is either purple or green, is the subject of this story.

Familiar as all crabs are, they are rarely seen in the larval stage, for then, like plankton, they are part of the drifting life of the surface waters of the sea. I have emphasized this stage of development to give the young reader a picture of that strange, fascinating water world. There, as weird, minute monsters, the crab larvae struggle to survive, in company with the larvae of other shellfish and with countless millions of one-celled animals and plants.

The habits of crabs vary greatly with the species, but their metamorphoses are essentially alike. Consequently, the life cycle of this sand fiddler crab can stand as the archetype for all crabs.

I am indebted to Dr. John C. Armstrong, Assistant Curator of Invertebrate Zoology of the American Museum of Natural History, for checking the manuscript for scientific data.

Mary Adrian  
Darien, Connecticut







## PURPLE BUTTONS

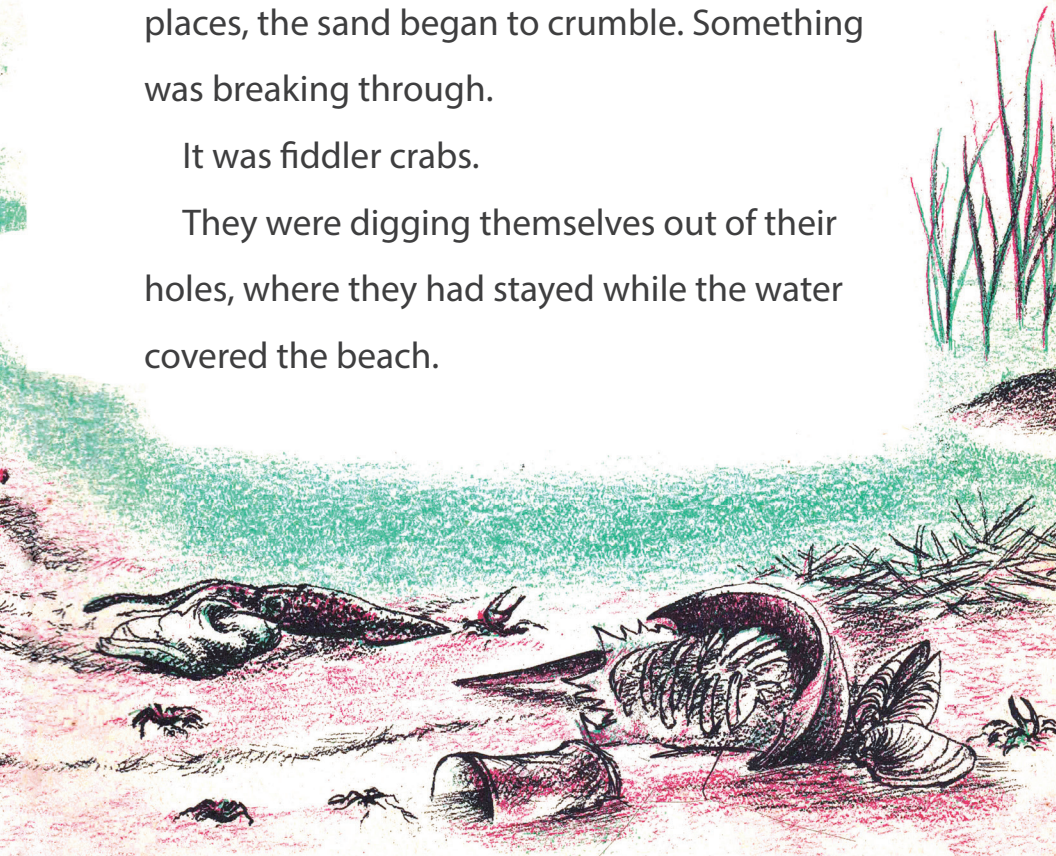
It was a warm evening in spring. A red glow rippled on the waters of the sound. It spread over the sandy beach and the marsh grass growing along the high tide line.

The tide was going out. Each small wave broke farther away from the marsh grass and left a little ridge of sand behind.

All along the beach, in hundreds of little places, the sand began to crumble. Something was breaking through.

It was fiddler crabs.

They were digging themselves out of their holes, where they had stayed while the water covered the beach.





Out they crawled and then stood still.

They were purple and about the size of jacket buttons. Their eyes were at the ends of two long stalks and looked in every direction—sideways, backward, forward.

They saw no birds nor other enemies on the beach, only a worm crawling to the water and mud snails hunting for food.

The crabs knew the waves were leaving food in the sand ridges—their food. They would go





hungry if the snails got it. So the crabs scurried down toward the water, speckling the beach with their tiny purple shells.

They walked sideways because their legs could not step straight ahead but only out from the side. Their legs on one side pulled, while those on the other side pushed.

The males ran and stopped wherever they found food.





## THE EGG

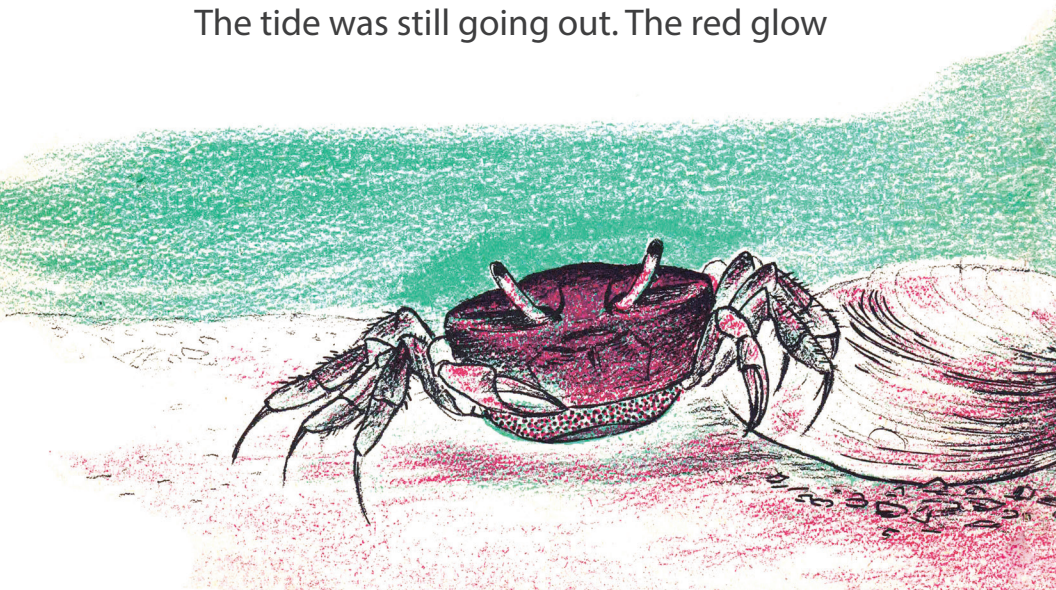
The females walked slowly. They were carrying thousands of eggs stuck to their abdomens.

All day they had hidden in their holes because they could not run from enemies. Now, in the twilight, they felt safe.

They walked over shells and bits of seaweed. They walked around a dead squid and pieces of driftwood and other things that had been washed ashore.

They passed the feeding males and waded into the shallow water.

The tide was still going out. The red glow



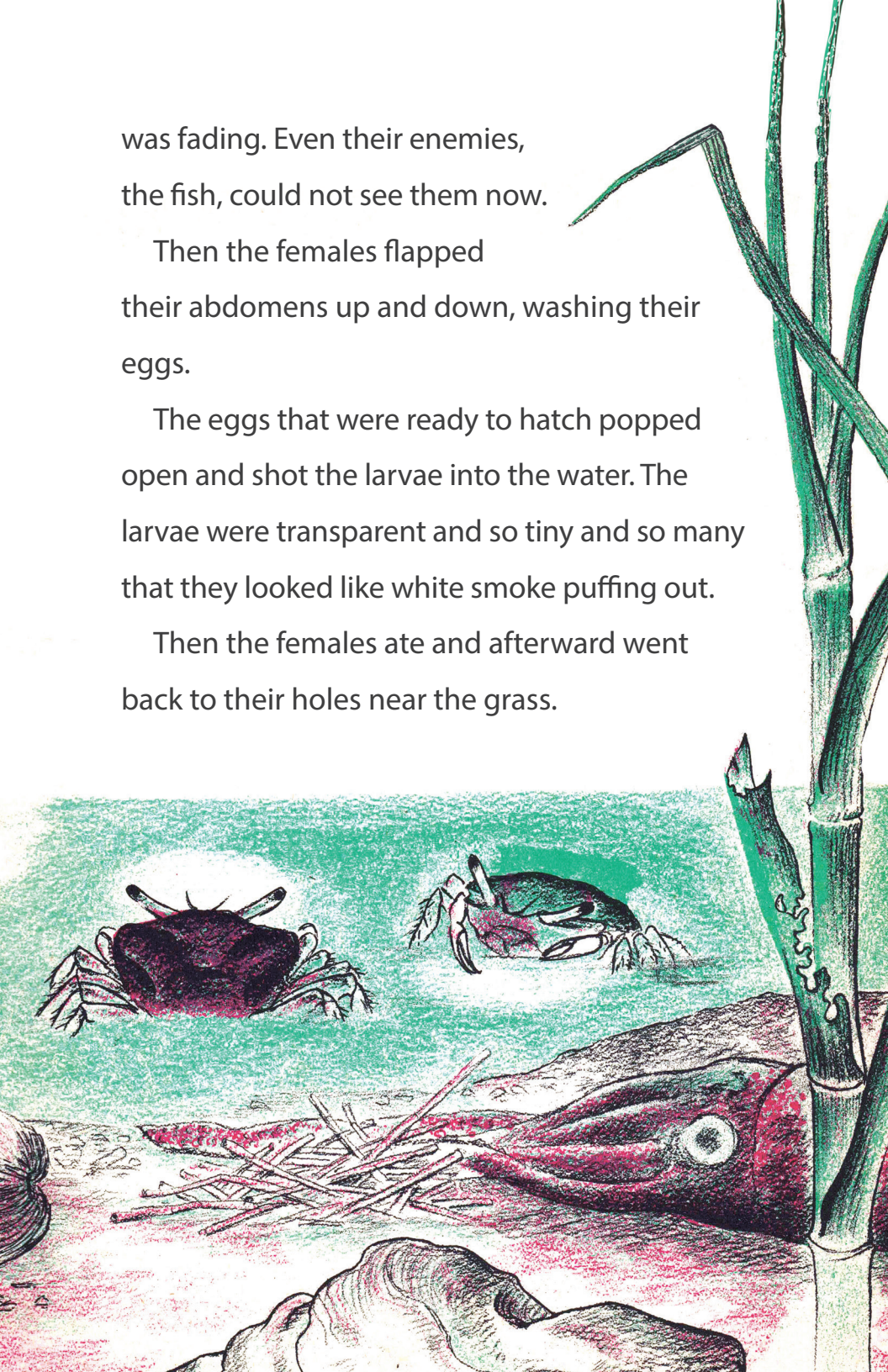


was fading. Even their enemies,  
the fish, could not see them now.

Then the females flapped  
their abdomens up and down, washing their  
eggs.

The eggs that were ready to hatch popped  
open and shot the larvae into the water. The  
larvae were transparent and so tiny and so many  
that they looked like white smoke puffing out.

Then the females ate and afterward went  
back to their holes near the grass.





# FIDDLER CRAB

With a sense of wonder for the natural world, timeless drawings, and engaging detail, this “living book” describes the fascinating life cycle of a fiddler crab as it grows from a small underwater larva into a feisty shoreline-dwelling adult crab. You’ll find yourself cheering along for young Fiddler Crab to beat the odds—to transition to land, to escape a hungry bird, to win a mate, and to survive a battle against a larger crab. *Fiddler Crab* is a delightful introduction to nature study for all ages!



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